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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the relationship between teachers' expectations of first and second grade bilingual students and reading achievement of students in English. Through classroom observation, researchers identified the expectations held by the teachers for the bilingual students and then identified teacher behaviors toward the high and low expectation students. Finally, the relationship between teacher expectations and reading achievement of the bilingual students was determined. Teachers had higher expectations of students with higher English proficiency. Spanish speaking students often received greater overall attention than did English speaking students, regardless of high or low expectations. Teachers spoke Spanish more often with students for whom they had low expectations. Students expected to have high achievement scored higher on reading tests than did those for whom teachers had low expectation. Implications of this relationship are discussed. (CB)

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TEACHERS EXPECTATIONS OF BILINGUAL CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT

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Introduction to the Study

The academic achievement of bilingual learners is a crucial concern that needs to be examined more intensively by educators who are determined to improve the effectiveness of elementary education. Witness, for example, that this year 1985, one-half of the children in kindergarten through sixth grade in California will be Spanish-speaking (Stupp, 1981). Too often, limited English-proficient students are not academically successful in public schools. For example, as early as the fourth grade, Hispanic students are scoring up to ten percentage points below the national average in reading, science, and mathematics (Brown, 1980).

There has been some effort made in the past two decades to understand and address the educational needs of linguistically and culturally distinct students who have been less successful than the traditional student in the United States. Many bilingual education programs have been initiated by federal legislation, such as ESEA Title VII of 1968. Bilingual education programs have also been supported by federal litigation of which Lau V. Nichols (Lau V. Nichols, 1974) is the most prominent case. As a consequence of bilingual programs and increased teacher contact with Hispanic students of both limited English-proficiency as well as fluent English-proficiency, educators have learned that complex factors influence the academic achievement of bilingual students.

We are not sure, for example, to what extent teacher expectations in a bilingual context influence the limited English-proficient students' academic achievement. Ryan and others conclude"... it is clear that teachers are the single most importnat element in the school...." (Ryan 1960).

The quality of teaching is a powerful factor affecting achievement.

Specifically, teacher expectations of student performance is one aspect of teaching that can encourage or hinder academic achievement. Gumperez (Gumperez, 1972) suggests that students' language is one crucial attribute that shapes teacher judgment and teacher expectations of students. Therefore, we need to determine exactly what relationship exists between teacher expectations and the limited English-proficient students' academic achievement.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between teacher expectations of selected first-grade and second-grade bilingual children and reading achievement of students in English. First, the researcher determined the expectations held by selected teachers of sampled students. Second, teacher behaviors toward the high and low expectation were identified. Finally, the relationship between teacher expectations and reading achievement of the sampled students was determined.

Specifically, the following four hypotheses gave direction to the study:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant positive correlation between the language proficiency of bilingual students and teacher expectations for reading achievement.

Null Hypothesis 2: There are no significant differences between ways teachers behave toward students and teacher expectations for reading achievement.

Null Hypothesis 3: There are no significant differences between achievement of students in English reading and teacher expectations for reading achievement.

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no significant positive correlation between teacher's use of Spanish when teaching a bilingual student and teacher's expectations for reading achievement in English.

Most research conducted on relationships between teacher expectations and student achievement has been limited to monolingual English-speaking students in traditional classroom settings. In one study a number of children were excluded from the study because they could not speak English fluently (Brophy and Good, 1969).

Studies suggest, in general, that a teacher's behavior changes as his or her expectations change. The hypothesized cycle of expectancy validation used by Brophy and Good includes the following steps:

1. The teacher forms differential expectations for students' performance;
2. The teacher then begins to treat children differently in accordance with his or her differential expectations;
3. The children respond differently to the teacher because they are being treated differently by that teacher;
4. In responding to the teacher, each child tends to exhibit behavior that complements and reinforces that teacher's particular expectations for him;
5. As a result, the general academic performance of some children will be enhanced while that of others will be depressed, with changes in the direction of the expectations;
6. These effects will be reflected in the results of the achievement tests given at the end of the year. (Brophy and Good, 1969)

Methodology

The site for the study was an urban elementary school district in Southern California. The sample consisted of seven bilingual teachers, four first-grade and three second-grade. Fifty-six students from the first-grade and second-grade bilingual classrooms participated in the study.

The Teacher-Child Dyadic Interaction System (Brophy and Good, 1969) was modified and used to code observed teacher-child interactions both in English and in Spanish in the bilingual classroom. The individual student, rather than the class, was the unit of analysis. Specific features were built into the coding system to study the communication of differential teacher expectations.

Five different types of dyadic interaction categories were coded with the Teacher-Child Dyadic Interaction System. The categories include:

1. Response Opportunities, in which the child publicly attempts to answer a question posed by the teacher.

2. Recitation, in which the child reads aloud, describes some experience or object, goes through arithmetic tables, or makes some other extended oral presentation.

3. Procedural Contacts, in which the teacher-child interaction concerns permission, supplies, and equipment, or other procedural matters concerned with the child's individual needs or with classroom management

4. Work Related Contacts, in which the teacher-child interaction concerns seat work, homework, or other written work completed by the child.

5. Behavioral Contacts, in which the teacher disciplines the child or makes individual comments concerning his classroom behavior.

In addition to the observation data collected, the student's level of proficiency in English based on the results of the Language Assessment Scales (DeAvila and Duncan, 1977) were obtained from the teacher, and to determine achievement in reading, the California Achievement Test were used.

The seven teachers were informed that the purpose of the study was to investigate the classroom behavior of children at various levels of achievement.

The teachers were not informed that their behavior also was being observed. Furthermore, the teachers were not informed about the specific subgroups of students that had been selected for the study. During the teacher meeting the observer obtained the class roster and seating chart from the teacher and asked the teacher to rank order four students whom they expected to be high achievers in English reading and four students whom they expected to be low achievers in English reading. In this way teacher expectations were measured. Approximately ten hours of interaction data were collected in each of the seven classrooms during a two-month period (May-June).

The data were collected by a bilingual observer located in the classroom in a position opposite from the teacher and behind or to the side of the students, who were seated in rows of individual desks or in small group tables of four to six students. Coding was restricted to interaction involving academic work and discussion since attention is directed to the teacher's expectations of students' academic peformance.

Null Hypothesis 1 and Null Hypothesis 4 were tested using Spearman rank correlation analysis. Spearman rank correlation coefficient were computed to determine the degree of association between teacher ranking of the high achievers in English reading and the low achievers in English reading with (1) rank in English language proficiency, and (2) rank in frequency of teacher's use of Spanish. In all cases the five percent level of significant ($P \leq .05$) was used as the criterion level for rejection of Null Hypothesis. Analysis of variance was used for Null Hypothesis 2 and Null Hypothesis 3.

Findings, Discussion and Implications

Four major and seven subhypotheses were tested using the data collected. The tests revealed that there was significant differences in all four hypotheses at the five percent level of significance ($P \leq .05$).

1. Is there a difference between language proficiency of bilingual students and teacher expectations for reading achievement?

The findings suggest a significant positive correlation between English language proficiency and teacher expectations. It seems that the more proficient a child was in the English language the higher were the teacher's expectations of the student in English reading achievement. Therefore if you're low in English proficiency, teachers have low expectations of the student in English reading achievement.

2. Is there a difference between the ways teachers behave toward students and teacher expectations for reading achievement?

   a) Students for whom there were high expectations received more teacher praise after answering correctly. Spanish-speaking students received higher degree of teacher praise after answering correctly than English-speaking students. Although the correct answer was given in Spanish, the praise was given in English by the teacher the majority of the time.

   b) Students for whom there were high expectations received more criticisms. This might suggest that English-speaking students for whom teachers have high expectations were expected to answer correctly.

   c) Wrong answers followed by the teacher repeating or rephrasing of the question were found significant for students for whom teachers held high expectations and who were Spanish-speaking. This could suggest that students for whom high expectations were held tended to receive more opportunity to respond correctly, and, thereby were encouraged to do well in English reading.

   d) In reading problems followed by repetition or rephasing of the question or by giving a clue, Spanish-speaking students for whom the teacher held high or low expectations were found to receive greater attention than did the English speaking students.

This finding could also be an indication that Spanish-speaking students were having more reading problems in English reading. However, teachers were willing to give them more opportunity to respond regardless of expectations held.

e) Spanish-speaking student for whom there were high expectations received the least feedback from the teacher when answering correctly or incorrectly.

f) Students for whom there were high expectations were called on more frequently to answer an open question when the student raised his hand. The literature says otherwise (Brophy & Good).

g) Direct questions from teacher to students showed no significant differences, however, it is worth noting that students for whom there were high expectations and Spanish-speaking received more direct questions from the teacher.

3. Is there a difference between reading scores for bilingual students and teacher expectations for English reading achievement?

The data suggests that a significant difference did exist between teacher expectancy for student achievement and the actual student performance. Student for whom high expectations were held tended to score higher on the end-of-the-year grade level equivalent scores on the California Achievement Test than students for whom low expectations were held.

4. Is there a difference between the teacher's use of Spanish when teaching the bilingual student and teacher expectations for reading achievement in English?

The findings reveal a strong positive correlations between teacher's use of Spanish and teacher expectations. Teachers behavior observed indicated that seven of the ten students with whom Spanish was used were students for whom there were low expectations. Teachers were using Spanish during a small proportion of the total interaction with the Spanish-speaking students, teachers did not appear to use Spanish to communicate academic performance expectations.

Other Findings (unhypothesized but interesting)

In general, 1) high expectant students were initiating three times more work-related interactions (completing seatwork, asking help on how to do work, etc.). English-speaking initiated twice as many work-related interactions than did Spanish-speaking students.

2) Teacher-initiated procedural interactions (cleaning-up running errands, etc.) occurred more frequently with students for whom there were low expectations.

3) Students for whom there were high expectations received a higher proportion of teacher-afford questions during reading group than did low expectant students.

4) Students for whom there were high expectations had a higher frequency of total correct answers than did low expectant students.

5) High expectant students had more reading problems per turn during reading group than did low expectant students.

6) High expectant students had almost three times as many criticisms in proportion to the total teacher-student dyadic contacts than than did low expectant students.

Implications

The implication of this study for classroom instruction and teacher preparation are that: (1) language proficiency assessment information must be understood and used for planning instructional programs for the bilingual child; (2) teachers should be proficient in "academic-instructional" language for the purpose of communicating academic performance expectations in the child's primary language; (3) teachers need to be aware of their behavior towards all the students in their classroom; and (4) teacher and child engaged in academic problem-solving and, thereby, academic performance

expectations are communicated resulting in "instructional-proficiency."

In brief, the findings of the study suggest that the more proficient a student is in the use of the English language in the classroom the higher will be the teacher's achievement expectations for that student in English reading. If a student is perceived by the teacher to be a low achiever in English reading, then that student is likely to score low in the English language proficiency assessments. By definition, students in bilingual classrooms speak at least two languages with varying degrees of proficiency. This suggests that language is a major influence shaping teacher expectations for the academic performance of limited-English proficient students in a bilingual education classroom. If low performance expectations are not to be communicated based on language, and if teachers are to respond to what academic skills a bilingual child needs to be learning, then language proficiency assessment information must be understood and used for planning of instructional programs and to teach the bilingual child in a manner that will optimize his or her academic performance and minimize the communication of differential teacher expectations.

Teachers in bilingual education classrooms need to develop both English and Spanish (or other target language) proficiency in academic areas including reading, mathematics and science in order to facilitate student learning. Language training in the Teacher Education Programs needs to focus on bilingual teachers, knowledge and skills in academic-instructional use of the child's home language.

The findings of this study revealed that teachers tend to use Spanish with children in ways that do not communicate high academic performance expectations. "Social" language use by the teacher of a child's home language leads to more teacher-initiated procedural interactions rather than work-related interactions. Thereby, lesser academic performance expectations are communicated.

Bilingual student-teachers need to do their student-teaching in an environment that will help them practice bilingual instructional skills and assess their effectiveness in the use of English and the child's home language to promote positive academic expectations.

Teachers need to become aware of their behavior towards students in the classroom. This can be enhanced with an on-going staff development process that is more intrinsic and less threatening than teacher evaluations. This kind of staff development needs to be devised and used in the school setting to promote self-analysis of instructional behavior by the teacher. In the Self-Analysis or Teacher-Peer Analysis process it is important that the observer be proficient in bilingual instruction. In addition to a collaborating observer, videotaping can be used to validate intended consequences rather than relying only on teacher observation. A program of instructional self-analysis needs to consist of periodic observation periods to establish reliability and validity of those behaviors observed. In this way teachers can evaluate the behaviors they use to teach bilingual students and use this knowledge to modify their teaching style to effectively promote academic performance for bilingual children.

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